



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

VI.—EFFECT OF SIGMATISM AS SHOWN IN HOMER.

In the quarrel scene in *Iliad* A, 179 f. occur these words :

*οἰκαδ' ἰὼν σὺν νηυσὶ τε σῆς καὶ σοῖς ἐτάροισιν
Μυρμιδόνεσσιν ἄνασσε· σέθεν δ' ἐγὼ οὐκ ἄλεγιζω—*

Professor Sterrett in his recent Edition of *Selected Books of The Iliad* makes the note "The hissing of the sigmas contributes to show the speaker's passionate excitement". This is doubtless directly connected with the note in Ameis-Hentze, "Das gehäufte σ in 179 und 180 gibt der leidenschaftlichen Rede einen scharfen Ton". These two comments are but typical of a whole series running back to Eustathius and from him to Dion. Hal., *De Comp. Verb.* 100. Some of these I gave in a former article (*Vol. XIX* 69 ff.). I shall repeat the note from Dionysius, as it is the centre of the problem :

ἀχαρι δὲ καὶ ἀηδὲς τὸ σ, καί, εἰ πλεονάσειε, σφρόδρα λυπεῖ· θηριώδους γὰρ καὶ ἀλόγου μᾶλλον ἢ λογικῆς ἐφάπτεσθαι δοκεῖ φωνῆς ὁ συριγμός.

The opinion current from Dionysius to the present is that sigma is especially the letter of rudeness or passionate anger, and that its repetition gives a disagreeable harshness to the tone. The notes I have quoted are simply applications or illustrations of a well-accepted theory. In the passage quoted from A there are seven sigmas in one verse and five in the other, or twelve in both. There are in Homer about three hundred examples of sigmatism as marked as this, so that in so great a number there might be found a few accompanying expressions of anger, joy, or sorrow and no safe conclusion could be drawn, but if practically all the examples belong to one class of emotions, then the conclusion is inevitable that the tone of sigmatism harmonizes with that class.

If there be any real sigmatic tone, the more sigmas any verse has the more distinct should be that tone, so that in verses with eight, nine, or ten sigmas the effect of sigmatism should be more clear than in a verse with but seven, as in A, 179.

There are in Homer about seventy verses with eight or more sigmas, so that it is safe to draw a conclusion of the effect of sigmatism from these seventy verses, if any conclusion can be drawn.

The Odyssey will be discussed in detail and the results thus obtained will be applied to the Iliad. I follow the text of Dindorf-Hentze. The Odyssey has thirty-five verses with eight or more sigmas each, and I wish to set these examples over against the theory of 'harsh, passionate, and disagreeable sigma'. They are as follows. The first example describes the lading of the ship for Telemachus:

β, 415: *κάθθεσαν, ὥς ἐκέλευσεν Ὀδυσσεύος φίλος υἱός.*
 γ, 26: *αὐτὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶ σῇσι νοήσεις.*

These are the encouraging words with which Athena tries to give spirit to Telemachus so that he may speak to Nestor. The next is from the speech he made to Nestor.

γ, 97: *ἀλλ' ἐν μοι κατάλεξον, ὅπως ἤντησας ὀπωπῆς.*
 λίσσομαι, εἰ ποτέ τοί τι πατὴρ ἐμὸς ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεύς
 δ, 48: *ἐς ῥ' ἄσαμίνθους βάντες ἐνυέστας λούσαντο.* Found also ρ, 87.
 δ, 241: *δοσοὶ Ὀδυσσεύος ταλασίφρονός εἰσιν ἀεθλοὶ.*
 501: *πέτρῃσιν μεγάλῃσι καὶ ἐξεσάωσε θαλάσσης.*
 582: *στήσα νέας καὶ ἔρεξα τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας.*
 844-5: *ἔστι δέ τις νῆσος μέσση ἀλὶ πετρήεσσα,*
 μεσσηγὺς Ἰθάκης τε Σάμοιό τε παιπαλοέσσης.

These two verses have more sigmas than any other two consecutive verses in Homer, having sixteen, while in A, 179-80 there are but twelve. Nothing could be milder than this calm description of the islet Asteris.

ε, 269: *γῆθόνονος δ' οὐρῳ πέτασ' ἰστία διὸς Ὀδυσσεύς.*

ζ, 149: These are the introductory words in the speech Odysseus made to Nausicaa. Odysseus appeared before her naked and miserable, so undone by his exposures in the sea that his looks were repulsive (*σμερδαλέος*). His whole fate depended on his making the best possible impression with the means he had, but all he had was his language, so he risked his all on that. A coarse, harsh, or disagreeable beginning and all was lost. His speech was most alluring:

μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῖνον.
γοννοῦμαι σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις, ἧ βροτὸς ἔσσι;
εἰ μὲν τις θεός ἔσσι,

Here in this introduction in twenty consecutive syllables twelve sigmas were used. Then later in the same speech, when most artful and flattering he said:

σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοῖεν, ὅσα φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινᾷς.

Yet these sigmas were not "harsh and repulsive" but on the

contrary so winning and gentle was his speech that Nausicaa at once replied,

ξείν', ἐπεὶ οὔτε κακῶ οὔτ' ἄφρονι φωτὶ ἔοικας.

If in Homer there were an atom of truth in the oftquoted statement of Dionysius that "sigma is harsh and disagreeable and if repeated sorely displeases", Odysseus would never have come before Nausicaa with such a flood of sigmas, and if he had so come she would certainly have been alarmed and followed her maidens in flight.

The next passage with a verse containing eight sigmas is from the scene where Echeneus advises Alcinous to care for the prostrate suppliant, Odysseus.

η, 163: εἶσον ἀναστήσας, σὺ δὲ κηρύκεσσι κέλευσον—

ι, 300: ἄσπον ἰών, ξίφος ὀξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος—

ι, 324: τόσσον ἔην μῆκος, τόσσον πάχος εἰσοράασθαι.

This is part of the famous description of the staff of the Cyclops. The verse which follows has more sigmas than any other verse in the *Odyssey*. The companions of Odysseus wonder:

κ, 45: ὁσος τις χρυσός τε καὶ ἄργυρος ἄσκῳ ἔνεστιν.

268: ἄξις σῶν ἐτάρων. ἀλλὰ ξὺν τοῖσδεσι θάσσον—

From the entreaty of Eurylochus to flee from Circe's island:

κ, 329-30: σοὶ δέ τις ἐν στήθεσιν ἀκήλητος νόος ἐστίν.

ἢ σὺ γ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι πολύτροπος,

κ, 506: ἰστὸν δὲ στήσας ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκὰ πετάσας.

528: εἰς ἔρεβος στρέψας, αὐτὸς δ' ἀπονόσφει τραπεύσθαι—

The last four verses spoken by Circe to Odysseus:

λ, 431: ἀσπάσιος παίδεσσιν ἰδὲ δμῶεσσιν ἑμοῖσιν—

ν, 213: Ζεὺς σφεας τίσαιτο ἱκετήσιος, ὅς τε καὶ ἄλλους—

349-50: τοῦτο δέ τοι σπέος ἐστὶ κατηρεφές, ἐνθα σὺ πολλὰς

ἐρδεσκες νύμφῃσι τεληέσας ἐκατόμβας.

These words are from the description of his own Ithaca, which Athena gave to Odysseus. The next describes the dogs of the Swineherd:

ξ, 22: τέσσαρες, οὓς ἔθρεψε συβώτης, δρχαμος ἀνδρῶν.

ο, 111-12: Τηλέμαχ', ἦ τοι νόστον, ὅπως φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινᾷς,

ὥς τοι Ζεὺς τελέσειεν, ἐρίγδονπος πόσις Ἕρῃς.

These verses begin the farewell greetings of Menelaus to Telemachus. This king was always a perfect gentleman, polite and kindly. At the very spot where he was most courteous he used the most sigmas.

In the next verse Telemachus plans with Eumaeus for the comfort of Odysseus.

- π, 82: εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, σὺ κόμισσον ἐνὶ σταθμοῖσιν ἐρύξας·
 ρ, 449: ὥς τις θαρσαλέος καὶ ἀναιδὴς ἐσσι προίκτης.
 υ, 92: τῆς δ' ἄρα κλαιούσης δπα σύνθετο διος Ὀδυσσεύς.
 φ, 137, 164: κλίνας κολλητῆσιν ἐνζέστης σανίδεσσιν·
 225: ὥς δ' αὐτως Ὀδυσσεὺς κεφαλὰς καὶ χεῖρας ἔκυσσεν.
 409: ὥς ἄρ' ἄτερ σπονδῆς τάνυσεν μέγα τόξον Ὀδυσσεύς.
 χ, 74: φάσγανά τε σπάσασθε καὶ ἀντίσχεσθε τραπέζας—

Eurymachus tries with these words to encourage the suitors to resist Odysseus. They are spoken not in anger, but to cheer, and the speech begins with δ φίλοι.

- ω, 30: ὥς δφέλες τιμῆς ἀπονήμενος, ἧς περ ἄνασσες.

From the address made by the shade of Achilles to the shade of Agamemnon. There are no other verses with eight or more sigmas in the *Odyssey*. Among so many examples there is not one case of passionate anger, but, with only three exceptions, all belong to calm description, or are spoken in tones of tenderness, politeness, or sadness. Not only is sigma associated with calmness, but whenever in the *Odyssey* a phrase is used implying the anger of the speaker, as for example *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη*, the verse immediately following is practically asigmatic. This example will illustrate: When the utterly unworthy and immoral Melantho insults Odysseus, he replies:

- σ, 337: τὴν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·
 ἦ τάχα Τηλεμάχῳ ἐρέω, κύνον, οἳ' ἀγορεύεις.

Only one sigma in this harsh and angry verse. Other verses illustrating this same rule are: θ, 166; ρ, 460; σ, 15, 389; τ, 71; χ, 35, 61, 321. These verses do not average two sigmas each. The conclusion to be drawn from calm verses abounding with sigmas and from angry verses without them is irresistible. The results obtained from a study of the *Odyssey* agree with those to be gained from the *Iliad*. The first marked example of sigmatism is A, 83, where the priest turning in confidence says to Achilles:

- ἐν στήθεσσιν ἑοῖσι. σὺ δὲ φράσαι, εἰ με σώσεις.

Here are nine sigmas, yet editors pass it over in silence to comment on the angry tone of repeated sigmas in a verse containing but seven, A, 179. The last pronounced case of sigmatism in the

Iliad is where Helen takes up the strain in the dirge chanted for Hector :

Ω, 771-2 : ἄλλὰ σὺ τόν γ' ἐπέεσσι παραφάμενος κατέρυκας
σῆ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνη καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν.

The four cases of the extreme of Homeric sigmatism, description of the island Asteris, Odysseus' address to Nausicaa, Menelaus' farewell to Telemachus, and this lament of Helen over Hector, seem to me to give the exact tone of sigmatism in Homer. Sigma is so closely joined with the idea of calmness or gentleness that nearly all words of insult, anger, or reproach are asigmatic. Some of them are as follows :

κύνον, κακαί, ἀμήχανε, νῆπιοι, μαινόμενε, πόποι, πέπον, ὀλοώτατε, δαιμόνιε, μάντι κακῶν, φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων, κερδαλέοφρον, ἀκριτόμινθε, ἡπεροπευτά, ἰόμωροι, βροτολοιγέ, μαιφόνε, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, λωβητήρ, παρθενοπίπα, ἃ δεῖλ', βουγαίε, αἰνότατε, νηπίτιε, κινάμναια.

This list is not complete, but it is certainly significant that so large a number of the words expressing passionate emotion are asigmatic. Not only do individual words of extreme anger rarely have sigma, but even whole verses expressing the most violent passion are asigmatic. I select the following six verses as denoting the highest pitch of passionate emotion.

A, 149: Achilles' reply to the threat of Agamemnon to despoil him of his prize :

ὦ μοι, ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένε, κερδαλέοφρον.

Z, 326: Hector returns to the city to urge the matrons to offer gifts to Athena, and finds Paris with Helen to whom he speaks with cutting words—*αἰσχροῖς ἐπέεσσιν*—as follows :

δαιμόνι', οὐ μὲν καλὰ χόλον τόνδ' ἔνθεο θυμῷ.

Λ, 385: Diomedes has been shot by an arrow to his great chagrin, and shouts in anger to the archer who wounded him :

τοξότα, λωβητήρ, κέραι ἀγλαέ, παρθενοπίπα,

Acamas, striving to rescue his slain brother, shouts :

Ξ, 479 : Ἄργεῖοι ἰόμωροι, ἀπειλῶν ἀκόρητοι.

X, 345: If one single verse were to be selected, as the most passionate in Homer, it would certainly be this verse in which Achilles denies the request of Hector to save his body from the dogs and return it to his kinsmen :

μή με, κύον, γοίνων γουνάζεο μηδὲ τοκίμων.

x, 365: When the dying Hector foretells to Achilles his impending doom he answers:

τέθναθι· κῆρα δ' ἐγὼ τότε δέξομαι, ὅππότε κεν δῆ—

To these may be added these three verses from A :

106 : *μάντι κακῶν, οὐ πῶ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγνυν εἶπας.*

122 : *Ἄτρεϊδῃ κύνιστε, φιλοκτεανώτατε πάντων,*

146 : *ἡὲ σύ, Πηλείδῃ, πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ' ἀνδρῶν.*

And also

Ω, 262 : *ἀρνῶν ἡδ' ἐρίφων ἐπιδήμιοι ἀρπακτῆρες.*

The whole subject of sigmatism has simply been allowed to go by default, and no one has taken the trouble to trace its origin and verify its application. In the former paper it was shown that Euripides was not especially prone to use sigmas, and that his reputation depends on a joke of two poets, Plato and Eubulus. The same jokes or joke is responsible for the theory of "passionate hissing sigma", as this theory depends on the fact that by chance the joke was directed against Medea 476:

ἔσωσά σ' ὥς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι κτλ.

Suppose, by chance, the joke had been directed against the grateful prayer of Orestes in Eumenides 754 :

ὦ Παλλὰς, ὦ σώσασα τοὺς ἐμὸνς δόμονς,

or at Soph., O. R. 1481, where the blind Oedipus says to his daughters:

ὥς τὰς ἀδελφὰς τάσδε τὰς ἐμὰς χέρας,

or at 1507 of the same play, where Oedipus pleads with Creon:

μηδ' ἐξισώσης τάσδε τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς,

or at a hundred similar sigmatic passages, then commentators would call attention to the calm and tender tone conveyed by repeated sigmas.

Here it is surely once more evident how dangerous it is to build a theory on the unsupported jokes of Comedy.

JOHN A. SCOTT.